

Taking Care--Documenting the Occupational Culture of Home Care Workers
Archie Green Fellows Project, 2014-2015
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Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Olena Kryuchenko interview, 2015-03-07 : interview conducted by Sonia De
La Cruz and Helen Marie Moss**

INTERVIEW LOG

PART 1: 00:03:33

00:00:00 Consents to interview. Olena Kryuchenko, lives in Beaverton, Oregon. Other jobs? In Kiev was chemical engineer.

00:01:22 I have been doing home care work for five years. I started with elderly female clients, one male client. I now have a younger client, disabled after a car accident; and an older woman, also disabled in a car accident.

00:03:05 How decided to become a home care worker? When I first came to this country I studied English at PCC [Portland Community College]. No work then, offered a job doing relief for another home care worker who could not work. (Process question from interpreter: should she translate simultaneously or wait for the answer, which slows down process? She was instructed to wait for the answer so the audio recording would be clear.)

00:03:33 End of Part 1

PART 2: 00:25:57

00:00:00 (Interpreting the process question and answer)

00:00:50 Anything else on how you got started? No, started working in home care, just like any other job, rewarding.

00:01:35 How is it different? Responsible for many things. I am everything to them.

00:02:19 Special skills? You have to have a special talent, like a singer has to have a good singing voice. Very important to love people, need to be very punctual and exact - I am never late! Have to be hard worker.

00:03:15 How did you learn? We went to a training, the one that is held in this office. Grateful for this training, I would not have known otherwise, not even where to look.

00:04:10 Typical day? My schedule is so set out I could tell you what I am doing right down to the minute! Used to write it in a diary, then I see my days don't change at all. Describes typical day. Client lives with parents, so they cook. I help him with exercises, spend lots of time playing cards and dominoes. Never TV, but he likes music so I play piano for him. Some personal care but my job is to be with him every second, not cooking or cleaning. Thanks to him, I am learning English! Speech is slow, so I learn. This client does not speak any Russian.

00:07:53 Do you feel close to clients? Yes, and there is no other way. Have to feel close with the person. Does this cause tension when go home? No, I see them everyday. Hard to set boundaries? Do they call you? No, I never have that.

00:09:30 Intimate tasks? Yes, first time with a male client. I had a personal barrier for the first time. I would have really liked some information or training then, but none available. Life itself sorts things out. Personal philosophy is that we all need care.

00:11:10 Good story?- She was asked to substitute for another person, difficult because of language barriers, so only there for ten days, but trying really hard. Frail, elderly woman with cat, the only family she had. One month later, I was called and told that the woman had died, and that the cat would be taken to the shelter. Of course, I went and got the cat. Family jokes that she needs to pick clients with no pets.

00:13:39 Friends who are home care workers? No - all my family members have an education, they do other work - only in trainings do I meet other home care workers.

00:14:26 What do you talk about? Maybe how lucky you are with client, or how difficult it is because they are so sick.

00:15:21 Is humor important in this job? Yes. I try to have a smile on my face, bring something good to the family, workplace.

00:16:23 Most rewarding? Knowing clients are well taken care of.

00:17:22 Most challenging? There are difficulties. Working with elderly, end of life coming, some depression; or with younger people, dealing with big challenges, they can be negative.

00:19:00 Union? Very happy in union, in the last five years I have received so much help. Training, health care, 2 salary raises. There is a language barrier - I wish I could do more in union.

00:20:00 Lobby days? No. Would you want to? Yes, but to do that need to know language.

00:21:07 Anything you want to tell? Hard work. Not always physically, but emotionally, when a client dies it is like a part of you dies.

00:22:05 Example of a gentleman she took care of who died, she still visits his grave. Special person, WWII vet. I brought my grandchildren to listen to him and they were very interested.

00:23:00 Other interests? I love my family, two dogs, two cats. We walk a lot, go to coast.

00:24:12 You seem passionate about what you do. How many years doing this work? 5 years. How long in US? 5 years. In your work, connect with broader Russian community?

00:25:00 Lots of family is here - don't have time for more.

00:25:33 Anything else? Probably not - grateful that you are interested, it is a very interesting job.

00:25:57 End of interview.